



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Health Administration
Washington DC 20420

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ASSISTANT DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH
INFORMATION LETTER

PREVENTING INJURY AND DEATH OF VHA EMPLOYEES WHO OPERATE OR
WORK NEAR POWERED INDUSTRIAL TRUCKS

1. This Information Letter (IL) is designed to provide information on power-operated (powered) industrial truck safe operating precautions to assist Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facilities operate their powered industrial truck safe driver program in compliance with the current provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Standard 29 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1910.178, Powered Industrial Trucks, Subpart N – Materials Handling & Storage.

2. Information on the safe operation of powered industrial trucks is contained in:

a. **National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Alert.** The NIOSH Alert entitled "Preventing Injuries and Deaths of Workers Who Operate or Work Near Forklifts." This alert may be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/pdfs/2001-109.pdf>. **NOTE:** *The alert applies only to powered industrial trucks operated in the sitting position. It contains significant statistical data on fatalities taken from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and shows the number of workers who died from traumatic injuries suffered from powered industrial truck overturns, workers on foot struck by powered industrial trucks, victims crushed by powered industrial trucks, and falls from powered industrial trucks.*

b. **OSHA Standard 29 CFR 1910.178.** This standard can be found at http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=9828&p_text_version=FALSE.

c. **VA Directive 7128.** VA Directive 7128 entitled "Storage and Distribution" and the accompanying Handbook entitled "Storage and Distribution Procedures". These documents may be found at <http://vaww.va.gov/oa&mm/policy/7128d.htm> and <http://vaww.va.gov/oa&mm/policy/7128h.htm>, respectively.

d. **VA Materiel Handlers Training Guide TG-90-1, Chapter 4 (Safety).** The training guide is available from the VA Service and Distribution Center, VA Forms and Publications Depot at (708) 786-7763.

e. **American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME)-American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Safety Engineering Standard (2000 edition).** ASME- ANSI safety engineering standard (2000 edition) entitled "Safety Standard for Low Lift and High Lift Trucks" (ASME/ANSI B56.1). **NOTE:** See website <http://www.asmeny.org/cgi-bin/WEB017C?678011+0001+00+00000+J08500> for information on purchasing this publication.

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3. Powered industrial trucks are defined by OSHA Standard 29 CFR 1910.178 and include: fork trucks, tractors, platform lift trucks, motorized hand trucks, walkie-riders, motorized pallet jacks, narrow aisle pickers, and other specialized industrial trucks.

4. Inclusion of the following items in VHA facilities' powered industrial truck safety programs improves regulatory compliance, results in improvement in the management of safety programs, and helps prevent employee injury and death:

a. Operators of powered industrial trucks need to be trained in the safe operation of powered industrial trucks.

(1) OSHA Standard 29 CFR 1910.178(l), VA Directive and Handbook 7128, and VA Materiel Handlers Training Guide TG-90-1, Chapter 4 (Safety) require that operators of powered industrial trucks receive training. This training is to consist of classroom and practical and/or hands-on training. Training must address the operating characteristics, limitations, and other unique features of the specific type of powered industrial truck that the employee is to operate.

(2) OSHA Standard 29 CFR 1910.178(l), VA Directive and Handbook 7128, and VA Materiel Handlers Training Guide TG-90-1, Chapter 4 (Safety) require that operators be certified upon completion of a written test and hands-on demonstration.

(3) OSHA Standard 29 CFR 1910.178(l)(4) specifies that refresher training is to be provided when an employee operates a powered industrial truck in an unsafe or inappropriate manner, when the employee is involved in an accident, and when the employee is assigned to drive a different type of powered industrial truck. This standard also requires that an evaluation of each powered industrial truck operator's performance be made at least once every 3 years.

(4) Hands-on-training can be provided by a qualified person at the VHA facility or by contracting with a qualified local power industrial truck sales company. Hands-on-training can also be accomplished using a train-the-trainer modality where one person from the VISN attends a train-the-trainer commercial class and subsequently trains other employees in the VISN. In any case, the person providing the training must know how to operate the equipment for which the training is being provided.

(5) Records of employee training are to be maintained in accordance with VHA facility requirements.

b. The scope of the ASME-ANSI B56.1 Standard defines the safety requirements related to the design, operation, and maintenance of low lift and high lift powered industrial trucks controlled by a riding or walking operator. They are intended to apply to low lift and high lift powered industrial trucks that are used on compacted and improved surfaces. The operation of powered industrial trucks should comply with all sections of the current edition of the ASME-ANSI B56.1.

c. VHA facilities' powered industrial truck safety programs need to implement safety procedures outlined in OSHA Standard 29 CFR 1910.178, as appropriate.

d. Serious hazards of powered industrial trucks result from: overloading, instability of the load, obstruction to the free passage of the load, collision with objects or pedestrians, poor maintenance, and the use of powered industrial trucks for purposes other than what they were intended or designed.

e. The manufacturers of powered industrial lift trucks are required to provide safety information with the truck for all operators. Tipover can occur as a result of overloading, traveling with the load elevated, braking or accelerating sharply while turning, rearward tilt or off-center positioning of the load, tire skidding, truck side sway, wheel lift, and tipping forward with the load.

f. The care and maintenance of all powered industrial lift trucks is very important. It is necessary that a thorough inspection of the powered industrial truck be made each day prior to use. This includes, but not be limited to: tire condition and their inflation, warning and safety devices, lights, battery, controls, lift and tilt systems, load-engaging means, chains and cables, limit switches, brakes, steering mechanism, fuel system(s), and additional equipment, as specified by the manufacturer.

5. Questions concerning this information letter may be directed to John Heywood, P.E., CSP, Senior Safety Engineer, at (612) 725-2000 extension 4564.

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